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WRITING ORAL DRILLS.

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ALL ORAL LANGUAGE DRILLS MAY BE SEPARATED INTO TWO TYPES--(1) MIM-MEM OR MIMICRY MEMORIZATION DRILLS OR (2) PATTERN PRACTICE DRILLS. THESE TWO LARGER CATEGORIES CAN BE SUB-DIVIDED INTO A NUMBER OF OTHER TYPES, SUCH AS TRANSFORMATION AND SUBSTITUTION DRILLS. THE USE OF ANY PARTICULAR TYPE DEPENDS ON THE PURPOSE TO WHICH THE DRILL IS PUT. IN ANY CASE, EACH DRILL SHOULD BE DESIGNED SO THAT IT CONTRASTS STRUCTURES AND SOUND SEQUENCES WHICH ARE DIFFICULT FOR THE STUDENT. THE WRITER OF ORAL PATTERN PRACTICE DRILLS SHOULD APPROACH HIS TASK IN MUCH THE SAME FASHION AS THE WRITER OF A PROGRAMED TEXTBOOK BUILT ON THE MODEL OF A SKINNERIAN LINEAR PROGRAM WOULD APPROACH HIS. THE STRUCTURAL LINGUISTS HAVE GENERALLY USED CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS AS A GUIDE FOR ORDERING THE MATERIAL FOR DRILLS. THE TRANSFORMATIONIST WOULD USE A LOGICAL ORDERING FOLLOWING THE ORDERING OF A THEORETICAL GRAMMAR. MOST AUDIOLINGUAL DRILLS HAVE BEEN CRITICIZED BECAUSE THEY MAKE THE TASK OF LEARNING A LANGUAGE A MECHANICAL TASK, AND THEY ARE DEATHLY BORING. ALTHOUGH THE FIRST OF THESE CRITICISMS MIGHT NOT BE READILY MET WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE AUDIOLINGUAL TEACHING PROCEDURE, THE SECOND OF THESE CAN BE MET BY CUEING DRILLS TO LITERARY MATERIALS. DRILLS BASED ON THIS ASSUMPTION HAVE BEEN WRITTEN AND USED WITH SOME SUCCESS IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE CENTER OF THE MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY. (AUTHOR)

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WRITING ORAL DRILLS

For purposes of discussion, it is convenient to separate all oral language drills into two basic types: (1) mim-mem or mimicry memorization drills and (2) pattern practice drills. The first kind of drill is least favored in the language learning situation, because it requires the student merely to repeat any given verbal sequence after the teacher's model. It is, however, indispensable in the teaching of pronunciation where, after-all, the object of the student's effort is to mimic the native or near-native pronunciation of the teacher and it is also the sine qua non of dialogue drills where grammatical patterns are not so easily under the writer's control. Pattern practice drills are, or should be, the mainstay of the activities in the foreign language classroom because these drills require the student to manipulate language patterns actively; true pattern practices are never constituted of "simple repetition" even though Professor John B. Carroll in the May 1965 issue of Modern Language Journal seems to feel that they are.

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It is not the purpose of this paper to concentrate primarily on the writing of mim-mem drills since these drills are relatively inflexible in form and offer less problems (or challenge) to the writer than the more complex types of pattern practice drills. They, nevertheless, should be mentioned in passing at least. For the teaching of pronunciation, the most common form of mim-mem drill is the minimal pair drill which focuses on a single sound contrast such as /r/ and /l/ as in write and light. Generally, these drills are composed of monosyllabic words which can be extracted from a convenient source such as Ted Plaister's, English Monosyllables (The University of Hawaii, 1966). Less frequently a single sound contrast can be found in a pair of multisyllabic words. Sometimes, it is even possible to construct pairs of sentences which drill a single sound contrast as in the Lado-Fries They're going to sail the boat/ They're going to sell the boat.[1] (Earl Rand's Taiwan published Oral Approach Drills contains a number of these conveniently located towards the back of the book.)

Besides the minimal pair drills, two other types of mim-mem drills can be effectively used in the teaching of pronunciation. These are the rhythm drills which generally are of a pyramiding type and the intonation-stress drills. Pyramiding rhythm drills are again generally of two types: (1) inner-pyramiding drills in which the pyramid is formed by expanding the number of syllables in a stress group and (2) outer pyramiding drills in which the pyramid is formed by expanding the number of stress groups. Both of these types are designed to help the student make the transition from a syllable timed language to English which is stress group timed. (See drill examples I) Intonation-stress drills generally give the student practice in shifting the moveable English stress and in always associating the intonation contour with the changeable stress patterns. (See drill examples II).

Pattern practice drills, as defined in this paper, are those drills which require the student to perform some type of an operation on a sentence (or linguistic unit) originally presented by the drill instructor or teacher. In the oral performance of these drills, the instructor gives some sort of a cue and the student is required to produce a response which is in some way or another different from the cue which the teacher has presented. These drills, if they are to be maximally effective, should be constructed in such a way that they meet one of the criterion for effective learning stated by John B. Carroll: "The frequency with which an item is practiced per se is not as crucial as the frequency with which it is contrasted with other items with which it may be confused."[2]

In any case, there are a number of types of pattern practice drills which can help the writer to meet this criterion. The first of these is the substitution drill, a drill type which is frequently used and which has many variations. The first type is the simple substitution drill (See drill examples, III). This type of drill generally is designed to aid the student in developing a sensitivity to the distribution of any given grammatical class, that is, these drills, for instance, would help a student to identify members of the class of nouns and to distribute them correctly in the slots or positions in which they can occur in the sentence. The element of contrast, at least on the grammatical level, cannot be worked into a simple subsitution drill as well as it can be worked into another type of substitution drill, free substitution. This kind of a drill cannot be given so readily to students who have not already learned the members of the different form classes. (The well known Sparrow incident[3] resulted from the fact that the students who were using a free substitution drill were not actually well prepared for it). This kind of a drill, however, does help to crystalize the student's sensibility towards the distribution of different members of different form classes, but

it is more difficult to construct because the writer can, if he is not careful, involve the students in nonsensical statements:

CUE	RESPONSE
The man washed the car	The man washed the car.
boy	The boy washed the car.
shined	The boy shined the car.
the glass	The boy shined the glass.
ate	The boy ate the glass.

Multiple substitution drills are also possible for the more advanced student. (Robinson, Theall and Wevers insertion drills. See drill examples, VII. 2). These drills which require the student to make more than a single substitution for any given response are especially useful in giving the student practice in ordering adverbs in English. (See drill examples IV.) Up to three items can be substituted in a single frame by a student of high-intermediate ability. If a picture is used to give a student the fourth cue, it is possible and may be even feasible to construct a substitution drill which requires the student to substitute in four different positions in a sentence. (Attention span is a factor here, though.)

Substitution drills are not merely designed to give the student practice in substituting the right form class in the right slot, (or putting the correct word in the correct position.) They can also be used to give students practice in making certain simple grammatical transformations. For instance, when a student is given a cue sentence <u>He goes downtown everyday</u>, by having him substitute <u>tomorrow</u> for <u>everyday</u>, the instructor can force the student to make a grammatical transformation in the tense of the verb changing the sentence to: <u>He is going to go downtown tomorrow.</u>

This leads directly to a second type of drill, the transformation drill, or as Robinson, Theall and Wevers would have it, the conversion drill.[4] With

the current popularity of transformation grammars, it would be expected that these drills play an important part in the language teaching situation. The use of these drills ante-dates Chomsky's formulation of transformation grammar by quite some time however. The Lado-Fries texts, or even the early Fries texts provided exercises in which the students changed statements into yes-no questions, affirmative statements into negative statements, or embedded a relative clause to a noun in a matrix sentence.[5] Few texts, however, have fully developed the carefully sequenced rules in transformation grammar leading from the embedding of a relative clause to the WH and BE deletion rules and corresponding shift of certain elements derived from these clauses to pre-nominal position.[6] Similarly, exercises following the development of nominalizing transformations are conspicuously absent from most English as a foreign language texts although these nominalizations have been relatively well worked out by linguists.[7]

Both Lado and Robinson, Theall and Wevers develop the use of addition drills which simply lengthen any given cue sentence by the addition of words and phrases.[8] These drills tax the student's ability often by simply reaching the upper limit of the attention span, but they are useful in giving practice in sentence expansion from simple sentence types (See drill example V). In some cases, they can even be used to supplement a transformation drill by causing a change in clause type through the addition of a single element. (These three types of pattern practice drill (substitution, transformation and addition drills) are the only ones discussed by Lado in Language Teaching.[9]

Robinson, Theall and Wevers also develop selection drills, scrambles, pyramids, insertion drills, frame drills, question and answer drills and combination drills.[10] Their scrambles, and insertion drills (See drill examples VII) appear to be eminently unworkable as choral-oral drills in classes of ten

students or more. They might possibly work in very small classes where each student is given plenty of time to think through an answer. Other students could only be involved in the exercise through a simple repetition of any given student's synthesis of the sentences in these drills. Similarly, their pyramid drills are similar to those already discussed under rhythm drills or addition drills. (See drill examples IX).

On the other hand, their question and answer drills are useful in giving the student practice in the structure of responses to questions -- in this they are indispensable, of course--but they are also useful in giving the student practice in structures which may otherwise be elicited through more "artificial" devices such as substitution or transformation, that is, the writer of a question and answer drill can successfully elicit different structures in answers by carefully controlling the structure of a question (See drill examples VIII). Furthermore, question and answer drills can be worked in reverse so that the structure of any given question can be elicited by a cue in the form of an answer with a carefully controlled stress pattern. (See drill examples X).

The combination drills of Robinson, Theall and Wevers deal with that grammatical process in which two sentences or sentence elements can be brought together to form a third more complex sentence or sentence element. Since generative grammars handle this process under the more inclusive term, grammatical transformation, it has been mentioned before in the discussion of transformation drills embedding relative clauses to nouns. It should nevertheless be pointed out that this process is also applicable to the conjoining of clauses of equal grammatical rank and to the subordination of adverb clauses to main clauses in sentences which have been traditionally referred to as

complex sentences. (See drill examples XI). These drills also prove to be important in giving students practice in the deletion of sentence elements from conjoined clauses.

In the forms of the preceding drills, adequate practice can be given to the students to handle the grammatical phenomena of most natural languages including English. It should be pointed out, however, that these drills should not be considered only as grammar drills. Morphological processes in the language, such as, for instance, the affixing of the plural morpheme /-s, -z, -ɨz/, should also be practiced in complete sentences or minimally terminable utterances. Similarly, it is often useful to construct some pattern practices as pronunciation drills, because the student very often can mimic a teacher's pronunciation quite accurately, but when he is required to produce a sound sequence not immediately modelled on an instructor's pronunciation, he very often fails to produce the sounds accurately. Thus, a pattern practice drill designed to exercise the student in pronunciation is not only a useful device for checking the student's control of a given sound contrast, but it is also an alternative to the mim-mem drill used in pronunciation improvement.

The writer of oral pattern practice drills should approach his task in much the same fashion as the writer of a programmed textbook built on the model of a Skinnerian linear program would approach his. He should attempt to lead the student through a carefully ordered series of steps to greater fluency and facility in the language. In this task, from the structural linguist's point of view, contrastive linguistics can be his guide. In those text's written from a structuralist's viewpoint, the attempt has generally been made to start with the structures which are easiest for the students of a given language background and move to those structures which are more difficult for the students of that background. Always the attempt is made, however, to concentrate on those areas

in the phonology, grammar, or morphology of the target language which are different from similar areas in the native language and thus problematic for the student. In the practical situation where a class of fifteen students might represent nine different language backgrounds, this attempt has been largely glossed over for pragmatic reasons. Since this is the case, some other criterion must be found for the ordering of material in a language teaching text, and this ordering may possibly be found in the logical ordering of rules in a transformation grammar. Transformation grammars undoubtedly will also help in answering the question: "What grammatical forms or structures should the student be drilled on?" However, it is my belief that a definitive answer to this question will not come from transformation grammar alone. I for one do not plan to drill my students on sentences such as John admires sincerity merely because I am afraid that they will produce sentences such as *Sincerity admires John. (Rules restricting the occurence of sentences such as the last example are probably matters of universal grammar; contrastive linguistics from the transformationalist's viewpoint will no doubt settle this problem.)

In any case, two of the most frequent criticisms directed against audio-lingual drills of the pattern practice type is that they are deathly boring and that they tend to treat the individual as though he were a machine. Little can be done by the writer about the second of these criticisms; the trouble resides mainly on the view of the conditioning process on which these drills or practices are predicated. The teacher alone can help to alleviate that problem. It has, however, been found that there is (tentatively) a solution to the first of these probelems, and this solution has at least one and possibly two or three beneficial side effects.

Generally, the reason that audio-lingual drills are boring for the student is that there is no inherent interest in the language of the patterns being practiced. In other words, the sentences of a pattern practice drill are generally a conglomeration of words and statements (or questions) which bear little or no relationship to one another and have no connection at all to any interesting subject matter. At the English Language Center of Michigan State University, an effort has been made to alleviate this problem with the development of what has come to be known as the audio-lingual lit materials.[11] These materials attempt to inject interest into the pattern practice drills by centering these drills on a reading of interest to the student. In these materials, a reading is selected for its literary merit or its value as an acculturation device. It sometimes is rewritten to include certain language patterns and exclude others. This reading then is used as a source for the language and the patterns in the drills which are written from it. Students and teacher in the class read the selection in chorus prior to their performance of the pattern practice drills.

From experience in the use of these drills it is evident that they hold more interest for both teacher and students than the conventional pattern practice drills. Furthermore, they also provide contextual meaning for the sentences in the drills, a type of meaning which is always present in the real language situation and,as Postal points,out a necessary component of meaning for the disambiguation of any string.[12] Besides this they permit a horizontal rather than a vertical organization of an intensive institute such as the English Language Center and thus give the teacher greater flexibility in handling a class, that is, in some intensive institutes, grammar drills are reserved for one hour, pronunciation drills for another, vocabulary for another and composition for another and so on. In my terminology, this is a vertical organization; each

teacher is occupied with a particular activity for a particular hour.

In the writing of audio-lingual lit materials, it has been found that the pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary and composition drills can effectively focus on a single reading.[13] Thus the teacher in any given hour can vary the activities of the class from practicing a minimal pairs drill in a pronunciation to doing a pattern practice on a particular point of grammar. It has also been found that the writing of sentences from oral cues in these materials gives the student good practice in controlled composition, and the eliciting of responses by the use of questions on the reading can be effective for both written and oral composition. In this manner, a teacher in any given hour is providing the students with pronunciation, grammar, composition and reading drills, thus varying the activities of the students and enlivening the class session in what I call a horizontal organization for an intensive institute. Besides this, the audio-lingual lit materials provide drills for the student in reading and writing, a facet of language learning generally neglected by language teachers commited to the oral approach.

ORAL DRILL EXAMPLES

I. Rhythm drills

(1) Inner pyramiding

The doctor's	a student
The doctor's	a good student
The doctor's	a very good student
The new doctor's	a very good student
The very new doctor's	not a very good student

(Although the number of syllables increases from one utterance to the next, the number of stress groups is kept constant by placing primary stress on doctor and student.)

(2) Outer pyramiding

I'm going to study
I'm going to study in my room
I'm going to study in my room with a friend
I'm going to study in my room with a friend that you know

(In these drills, new stress groups are added to the original cue by placing the primary stress on study, room, friend and know. The examples are from Lado and Fries, English Pronunciation (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan, 1954), pp. 68, 139.

II. Intonation Stress drills

CUE	RESPONSE
John was studying in his room last night.	John was studying in his room last night.
Who was studying in his room last night?	John was studying in his room last night.
What was John doing in his room last night?	John was studying in his room last night.
Where was John studying last night?	John was studying in his room last night.
When was John studying in his room?	John was studying in his room last night.

(Adapted from Lado Fries, Pronunciation, p. 118. Underlined items receive primary stress.)

III. Simple substitution drill

CUE	RESPONSE
The alphabet is important.	The alphabet is important.
the lesson	The lesson is important.
the answer	The answer is important.
the class	The class is important.
the symbol	The symbol is important
the spelling	The spelling is important.

(From Lado and Fries, English Sentence Patterns, p. 3)

IV. Multiple substitution drill.

Picture

CUE	RESPONSE
Men downtown, slowly walking yesterday	They walked slowly downtown yesterday.
Men last Saturday, hard working at home	They worked hard at home last Saturday.
Man in the bedroom, quickly dressing last night	He dressed quickly in the bedroom last night.

(Adapted from Lado and Fries, English Pattern Practices, p. 27)

V. Addition drills

CUE	RESPONSE
He said his wage has gone up.	He said his wage has gone up.
She owns a business.	He said she owns a business.
She's going to stay home.	He said she's going to stay home.
He's eaten his lunch already.	He said he's eaten his lunch already.

(From Robinson, Theall and Wevers, Let's Speak English, Vol. II, p. 43)

VI. Addition drills -- Change in Clause Type.

CUE	RESPONSE
We attend the concert.	We attend the concert.
Do	Do we attend the concert?
When	When do we attend the concert?
They work everyday.	They work everyday.
Do	Do they work everyday?
Where	Where do they work everyday?

(Adapted from Lado and Fries, English Pattern Practices, p. 42)

VII. Scrambles, frame drills and insertion drills.

(1) Scrambles

CUE	RESPONSE
morning this work started here I	I started work here this morning.
you when work start did?	When did you start work?
don't sew know you to how?	Don't you know how to sew?
have at ten we coffee a break	We have a coffee break at ten.

(From Robinson, Theall and Wevers, Let's Speak English, Vol. II, p. 29)

(2) Frame drill

CUE	RESPONSE
typewriter, be, expensive My typewriter is as expensive as yours.	My typewriter is as expensive as yours. expensive as yours.
pie, taste, nice	My pie tastes as nice as yours.
car, be cheap	My car is as cheap as yours.
son, seem, lazy	My son seems as lazy as yours.

(From Robinson, Theall and Wevers, Let's Speak English, Vol. II, p. 80)

(3) Insertion drills

CUE	RESPONSE
They...looking...apartment.	They are looking for an apartment.
I haven't...dress...'s fit...wear.	I haven't got a dress that's fit to wear (??)
Which...hardest...you?	Which is hardest for you?
I...be able...afford...send my son... university next year.	I won't be able to afford to send my son to the university next year.

(From Robinson, Theall and Wevers, Let's Speak English, Vol. II, pp. 137 - 139)

VIII. Question to Answer drills.

CUE	RESPONSE
Why did you come in?	Because of the cold. I came in because it was cold.
Why did you eat the cookies?	Because of my hunger. I ate the cookies because I was hungry.
How did you kill the deer?	With a bow and arrow. I killed the deer with a bow and arrow.
How did you cut the cake?	With a knife. I cut the cake with a knife.

IX. Pyramid Drills.

CUE	RESPONSE
The student writes.	The student writes.
a letter	The student writes a letter.
to his friend	The student writes a letter to his friend.
in Sweden.	The student writes a letter to his friend in Sweden.

X. Answer to Question drills.

CUE	RESPONSE
Mary worked at home <u>yesterday</u>.	When did Mary work at home?
Mary worked <u>at home</u> yesterday.	Where did Mary work yesterday?
<u>I</u> met John.	Who met John?
I met <u>John</u>.	Who did I meet?

(Underlined item or phrase receives the primary stress. Adapted from Lado and Fries, <u>English Sentence Patterns</u>, p. 86)

XI. Combination drills.

CUE	RESPONSE
The sun shines. The snow melts.	When the sun shines, the snow melts.
It is snowing. The weather is nice.	Although it is snowing the weather is nice.
It is cold. We can't go out.	Because it is cold, we can't go out.

Foot-notes

[1]Robert Lado and Charles C. Fries, English Pronunciation (Ann Arbor, Mich.: The University of Michigan, 1954), p. 41.

[2]John B. Carroll, "The Contributions of Psychological Theory and Educational Research to the Teaching of Foreign Languages," Modern Language Journal, XLIX (May 1965), 280.

[3]G. Mathieu, "'Pitfalls of Pattern Practice,' An Exegesis," The Modern Language Journal, XLVIII (1964), 20 - 24.

[4]Richard H. Robinson, Donald F. Theall, and John W. Wevers, Basic Guide to Let's Speak English, (Toronto: W. Gage, n.d.), p. 19.

[5]Robert Lado and Charles C. Fries, English Sentence Patterns (Ann Arbor, Mich.: The University of Michigan Press, 1957), pp. 1, 43, 200.

[6]The attempt has been made to develop this series of rules in some of the audio-lingual lit material used at the English Language Center, Michigan State University.

[7]Robert B. Lees, The Grammar of English Nominalizations, IJAL, 26 (1960).

[8]Robert Lado, Language Teaching (New York: McGraw Hill, 1964), p. 111. Robinson, Theall and Wevers, op. cit., p. 20.

[9]Lado, op. cit., pp. 108 - 112.

[10]Robinson, Theall and Wevers, op. cit., pp. 17 - 22.

[11]See James W. Ney, "On the Use and Development of Audio Lingual Lit Materials," Language Learning, (forthcoming).

[12]Paul M. Postal, "Underlying and Superficial Linguistic Structure," Harvard Educational Review, 34 (1964), 263 - 264.

[13]Vinal O. Binner has worked on a similar concept to that underlying the audio-lingual lit material in American Folktales 1: A Structured Reader (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1966). His drills are not quite so thoroughly worked out as they are in the audio lingual lit material neither are they easy to use as oral drills in my opinion.